

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 1173

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, CASC

SUBJECT: OXY-LARG DISPUTE

REF: TRIPOLI 1169

1. DESPITE MFA UNDERSECRETARY DURDAH'S ASSURANCE THAT OXY FIELD WORKERS CAN ROTATE IN AND OUT OF LIBYA ON THE BASIS WORKED OUT BETWEEN PETROLEUM MINISTER MABROUK AND OXY LIBYA PRES. ESPEY OCT 7 OR 8, PROCEDURE WAS NOT WORKING WELL AS OF YESTERDAY. DIFFICULTY SEEMS TO ARISE IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARRANGEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR SECURITY AND PASSPORT SERVICES. AS DEPT AWARE FROM OTHER PROBLEMS EMBASSY HAS HAD IN PAST TWO YEARS, INTERIOR OFTEN APPEARS TO OPERATE AS A LAW UNTO ITSELF. ESPEY WILL CAMP ON MABROUK'S DOORSTEP TODAY UNTIL HE CAN SEE HIM AND ASK FOR PETMIN'S URGENT INTERVENTION. POSSIBLY DURDAH'S INFLUENCE ON THE PROBLEM NEEDED A DAY OR TWO TO BECOME EFFECTIVE AT INTERIOR. HOWEVER, WE WILL GO BACK TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TODAY. WE ALSO RECOMMEND THAT DEPT REQUEST LIBYAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON TO REPORT ITS SERIOUS CONCERN.

2. CURRENT PHASE OF ROTATION PROCEDURE IS BASED ON LIST OF 14 FIELD WORKERS OF VARIOUS NATIONALITIES WHO SHOULD BE ABLE TO DEPART BECAUSE AN EQUAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES HAVE BEEN VERIFIED. OCT 17 SIX OF 14 TRIED TO DEPART. ONE AMERICAN AND ONE EGYPTIAN DEPARTED NORMALLY BUT THREE AMERICANS AND ONE BRITISHER WERE TURNED BACK.
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OTHER WORKERS (A FEW - WE DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY) SEEM TO HAVE BEEN

ABLE TO LEAVE IN RECENT DAYS, BUT THERE IS GENERAL FEELING THAT THEY SLIPPED BY CARELESS AIRPORT OFFICIALS. IT IS POSSIBLE HIGHER LEVEL SECURITY OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN IN LESS THAN COOPERATIVE MOOD BECAUSE SOME OXY PEOPLE SLIPPED OUT UNDER THEIR NOSES AND BECAUSE OF COMPANY'S ILL CONSIDERED ATTEMPT A FEW DAYS AGO TO FORCE THE ISSUE BY SENDING TO THE AIRPORT TWO AMERICANS AND TWO BRITISH FIELD EMPLOYEES WHO WERE NOT ON BASIC LIST.

3. MEANWHILE IMPATIENCE AND FRUSTRATION OF AMERICANS AT OXY PUMPING STATION AND BRITISHERS AT ZUWAYTINA TERMINAL IS INCREASING, AND BECOMING OMINOUS ACCORDING TO TWO AMERICAN OIL WORKERS AND OXY OFFICIALS WE SPOKE TO YESTERDAY. LATTER SAID MILITARY GUARDS ARE NOW ON DUTY AT FIELD INSTALLATIONS AND ONE LIBYAN NAVY TORPEDO BOAT IS OFF SHORE AT THE TERMINAL. BRITISH SUPERVISOR AT ZUWAYTINA REPORTED TO UK EMBASSY THAT BRITISH WORKERS WERE RESTIVE AND THREATENING TO SEND DELEGATION TO HAVE A SIT-IN AT UK EMBASSY UNTIL PROBLEM IS SETTLED. BOTH HE AND AMERICAN WHO REPORTED TO US ARE RETURNING TO FIELD TO TRY TO CALM THEIR COLLEAGUES.

4. WE UNDERSTAND THAT IF MEN WERE TO WALK OFF THE JOB, ENORMOUS DAMAGE COULD RESULT. OXY FACILITIES HANDLE AGIP PRODUCTION WHICH HAS HEAVY WAX INGREDIENT. IF AMERICANS WALKED OFF, OIL WOULD SOLIDIFY IN PIPELINE DAMAGING IT BEYOND REPAIR. BRITISH WALK OUT WOULD SIMILARLY RUIN STORAGE TANKS.

5. ONE BASIC COMPLAINT OF MEN IN THE FIELD HAS BEEN THAT THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON. WE HAVE SUGGESTED TO THE AMERICAN FIELD REPRESENTATIVE WITH WHOM WE HAVE HAD CONTACT THAT MEN KEEP A SPOKESMAN IN TRIPOLI CONTINUALLY (THEY SAY THEY WILL DO THIS.) WE HAVE ASSURED HIM EMBASSY WILL TELEPHONE MEN ON REGULAR BASIS. ALSO HAVE IN MIND SENDING CONSUL DANGA TO VISIT MEN AT PUMPING STATION IF THIS SEEMS FEASIBLE.

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